



## Section 5: Program Partners

### Getting Involved:

## The National Association of Mental Health Planning and Advisory Councils and National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day

### What is National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day?

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Center for Mental Health Services is launching an annual national initiative called "National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day." National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day is designated as a day in May of each year to coincide with "May Is Mental Health Month." This day presents an opportunity for SAMHSA and children's mental health initiatives to promote resilience, recovery, and the transformation of mental health services delivery for children and youth with serious mental health needs and their families.

The theme of the inaugural celebration of National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day is "Thriving in the Community." Children's mental health initiatives will hold similar events and other activities throughout the country to build awareness that children's mental health needs are real and that progress is being made toward developing effective strategies for achieving the vision of a life in the community for everyone.

### Why is the National Association of Mental Health Planning and Advisory Councils participating in National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day?

National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day offers planning councils an opportunity to act as advocates for children's mental health and carry the message that mental health needs are real, preventable, and treatable. Planning councils can become involved in educating the public about mental health issues, including the high rate of suicide among adolescents. It is important for planning councils to be knowledgeable about children's mental health issues so that they can educate legislators and other key decision makers about the importance of providing appropriate and adequately funded services for children.

### How can State mental health planning councils get involved?

State mental health planning councils can become involved in National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day in several ways. For instance, planning councils can perform their statutorily required mandate to advocate for persons with mental health concerns through conducting public education campaigns, or hosting children's mental health forums in the community. Council members may also work with the local media to develop public service announcements. Educational campaigns can include writing educational letters to local newspaper editors, and sending letters to legislators in which they educate them about the need for appropriate and adequately funded prevention, intervention, and services for children, which can be effective in reducing the overall health care burden over time. Planning councils may also choose to work with the Department of Education member of the planning council to host an educational fair using expert speakers that can be presented to school personnel.



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As part of the planning council's monitoring role, planning councils may also be involved in evaluating the adequacy and availability of mental health services for children and their families. The council can also ensure that the mental health needs of children are addressed in the State's Block Grant plan and in other strategic or policy documents.

Finally, because the composition of planning councils includes representation from a variety of State agencies that serve children, the planning council can also help promote collaboration among child-serving agencies, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that all child-serving agencies are familiar with mental health services, leading to a "no wrong door" approach to ensuring that children and their families receive the services they need.

### **Where can I get more information about National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day?**

Information and materials on National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day are available online at [www.systemsofcare.samhsa.gov](http://www.systemsofcare.samhsa.gov). You can also call 703-838-7520 for more information.